



**NEW ENGLAND  
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items  
2009**

**Grade 11  
Reading**

# Reading

❶ The prefix *contra-* in the words contrary and contradict means

- A. with.
- B. opposite.
- C. false.
- D. damaged.

❷ The phrase to sit on the fence means to be

- A. undecided.
- B. uncomfortable.
- C. disinterested.
- D. detained.

*Suffragists worked to obtain national voting rights for women; their goal was finally achieved in 1920. Read this passage to learn about the courageous efforts of one suffragist. Then answer the questions that follow.*

### **Edna Purcell: Suffragist**

Hartford, Connecticut, and Washington, D.C., 1918

*Phillip Hoose*

#### **“He broke two of my fingers taking my banner away.”**

Edna took the train to Washington. On August 6, she and hundreds of other suffragists hoisted long, streaming banners and began to march toward Lafayette Park, shouting slogans as they advanced. They were angry that Democrats in the U.S. Senate had gone on summer recess without voting on a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would give women the right to vote. At the park, they demanded that President Woodrow Wilson come out of the White House to speak with them. But whenever one of the women tried to speak, she was grabbed by the police and forced into a patrol wagon. Outraged, a few women scaled a statue of Lafayette and shouted their defiance from the top to all who could hear. Edna was one of them:

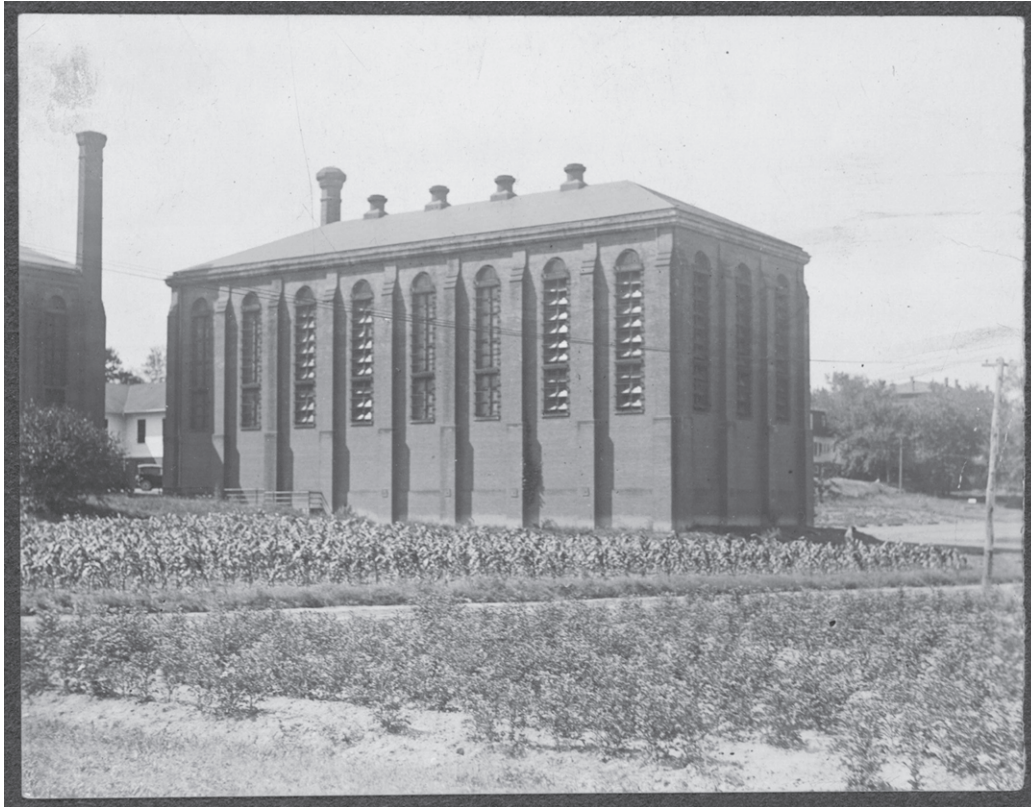
“I was so young that I could climb the statue and call out, ‘Lafayette, we are here!’ The police wouldn’t arrest you until you began to speak. Those were their orders. I was arrested four times for climbing the statue. Some of the police would throw us in the wagon, others would help us in. They would take us down to the jail, then they’d let us go. The older women couldn’t go back to Lafayette Park, but I went back. I carried the American flag, and sometimes another banner that said, ‘I come from Connecticut, the Cradle of Liberty.’ It was purple, white and gold [suffragist colors].

“The last time I was arrested a young policeman came over [and said] they had orders to take those banners away from us. I said to him, ‘Oh, I can’t give you this banner. This banner is my banner of liberty’ . . . [Then] a great big cop came along and told him, ‘Take [her banner] away.’ The young cop said to him, ‘You take it away.’ [The other cop] bent back my fingers, and he broke two of them taking it away . . . We were taken to the Washington District workhouse. Many of the women were desperately ill. We couldn’t even drink the water in that place.”

The Washington District workhouse was set in a swamp. Years before, it had been declared “unfit for human habitation” and had been closed down. Shortly after they entered, the women voted to go on a hunger strike. That meant they would live only on the reddish brown drinking water that trickled through rusted pipes. One prisoner after another became ill. U.S. senators who visited were shocked by the conditions and demanded their release. President Wilson received a flood of telegrams from outraged citizens, and, after five days, the women were freed. Edna’s broken fingers were still untreated when she stepped outside. The women immediately applied for a permit to hold a second rally in Lafayette Park. This time, police made no attempt to stop them.

Edna's arrest and imprisonment made the Hartford newspapers. When she returned to her job in the filing department of the Travelers Insurance Company, her admiring co-workers greeted her with a large sign reading VOTES FOR WOMEN. The company president wasn't pleased.

"When I came back, Batterson [the president] called me down [to his office]. He said, 'You know, Miss Purtell, you're liked very well here, but we don't want you to be talking about suffrage . . .' I said to him, 'Mr. Batterson, during work hours I'll take care of my job. But once I get in that elevator, what I talk about is my business, not yours. And on our coffee break, that's our coffee break, and I'll talk about anything I want.'"



*Washington District workhouse where the marchers were imprisoned*

- 3 What was the purpose of the march on August 6?
- A. to attempt to free the women who had been arrested
  - B. to call for President Woodrow Wilson's resignation
  - C. to protest the Senate's failure to vote on an amendment
  - D. to gain much-needed publicity for the suffragist movement

- 4 The word habitation refers to a place where people
- A. work.
  - B. hide.
  - C. eat.
  - D. live.

- 5 Which factor led to the release of the women imprisoned in the Washington District workhouse?
- A. pressure from the public and officials
  - B. the lack of space inside the workhouse
  - C. a settlement negotiated with the police force
  - D. newspaper coverage of Edna Purtell's injuries

- 6 Which word **best** describes the reaction of Edna Purtell's coworkers to her protest?
- A. disbelieving
  - B. uninterested
  - C. supportive
  - D. entertained

- 7 Describe how Edna Purtell demonstrated bravery throughout the events described in the passage. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

*Read this passage to learn about the experience of a young artist. Then answer the questions that follow.*

## **The Contest**

*Langston Hughes*

Casually, one day, Miss Dietrich asked Nancy Lee what color frame she thought would be best on her picture. That had been the first inkling.

“Blue,” Nancy Lee said. Although the picture had been entered in the Artist Club contest a month ago, Nancy Lee did not hesitate in her choice of a color for the possible frame since she could still see her picture clearly in her mind’s eye—for that picture waiting for the blue frame had come out of her soul, her own life, and had bloomed into miraculous being with Miss Dietrich’s help. It was, she knew, the best water color she had painted in her four years as a high-school art student, and she was glad she had made something Miss Dietrich liked well enough to permit her to enter in the contest before she graduated.

It was not a modernistic picture in the sense that you had to look at it a long time to understand what it meant. It was just a simple scene in the city park on a spring day with the trees still leaflessly lacy against the sky, the new grass fresh and green, a flag on a tall pole in the center, children playing, and an old black woman sitting on a bench with her head turned. A lot for one picture, to be sure, but it was not there in heavy and final detail like a calendar. Its charm was that everything was light and airy, happy like spring, with a lot of blue sky, paper-white clouds, and air showing through. You could tell that the old black woman was looking at the flag; and that the flag was proud in the spring breeze; and that the breeze helped to make the children’s dresses billow as they played.

- 4 Miss Dietrich had taught Nancy how to paint spring, people and a breeze on what was only a plain white piece of paper from the supply closet. But Miss Dietrich had not said make it like any other spring-people-breeze ever seen before. She let it remain Nancy Lee’s own. That is how the old black woman happened to be there looking at the flag—for in her mind the flag, the spring and the woman formed a kind of triangle holding a dream

Nancy Lee wanted to express. White stars on a blue field, spring, children, ever-growing life, and an old woman. Would the judges at the Artist Club like it?

One wet rainy April afternoon Miss O’Shay, the girls’ vice-principal, sent for Nancy Lee to stop by her office as school closed. Pupils without umbrellas or raincoats were clustered in doorways hoping to make it home between showers. Outside the skies were gray. Nancy Lee’s thoughts were suddenly gray, too.

She did not think she had done anything wrong, yet that tight little knot came in her throat just the same as she approached Miss O’Shay’s door. Perhaps she had banged her locker too often and too hard. Perhaps the note in French she had written to Sallie halfway across the study hall just for fun had never gotten to Sallie but into Miss O’Shay’s hands instead. Or maybe she was failing in some subject and wouldn’t be allowed to graduate. Chemistry! A pang went through the pit of her stomach.

She knocked on Miss O’Shay’s door. That familiarly solid and competent voice said, “Come in.”

Miss O’Shay had a way of making you feel welcome even if you came to be expelled.

“Sit down, Nancy Lee Johnson,” said Miss O’Shay. “I have something to tell you.” Nancy Lee sat down. “But I must ask you to promise not to tell anyone yet.”

“I won’t, Miss O’Shay,” Nancy Lee said, wondering what on earth the principal had to say to her.

“You are about to graduate,” Miss O’Shay said, “And we shall miss you. You have been an excellent student, Nancy, and you will not be without honors on the senior list, as I am sure you know.”

At that point there was a light knock on the door. Miss O’Shay called out, “Come in,” and Miss Dietrich entered. “May I be a part of this, too?” she asked, tall and smiling.

“Of course,” Miss O’Shay said. “I was just telling Nancy Lee what we thought of her. But I hadn’t gotten around to giving her the news.

Perhaps, Miss Dietrich, you'd like to tell her yourself."

Miss Dietrich was always direct. "Nancy Lee," she said, "your picture has won the Artist Club scholarship."

The slender brown girl's eyes widened, her heart jumped, then her throat tightened again. She tried to smile, but instead tears came to her eyes.

"Dear Nancy Lee," Miss O'Shay said, "we are so happy for you." The elderly white woman took her hand and shook it warmly while Miss Dietrich beamed with pride.

Nancy Lee must have danced all the way home. She never remembered quite how she got there through the rain. She hoped she had been dignified. But certainly she hadn't stopped to tell anybody her secret on the way. Raindrops, smiles, and tears mingled on her brown cheeks. She hoped her mother hadn't yet gotten home and that the house was empty. She wanted to have time to calm down and look natural before she had to see anyone. She didn't want to be bursting with excitement—having a secret to contain.

**18** Miss O'Shay's calling her to the office had been in the nature of a preparation and a warning. The kind, elderly vice-principal said she did not believe

in catching young ladies unawares, even with honors, so she wished her to know about the coming award. In making acceptance speeches she wanted her to be calm, prepared, not nervous, overcome, and frightened, so Nancy Lee was asked to think what she would say when the Scholarship Award was conferred upon her a few days hence, both at the Friday morning high school assembly hour when the announcement would be made, and at the evening banquet of the Artist Club. Nancy Lee promised the vice-principal to think calmly about what she would say.

Miss Dietrich had then asked for some facts about her parents, her background and her life, since it would probably all be desired for the papers. Nancy Lee had told her how, six years before, they had come up from the Deep South, her father having been successful in achieving a transfer from one post office to another, a thing he had long sought in order to give Nancy Lee a chance to go to school in the North. Now, they lived in a modest black neighborhood, went to see the best plays when they came to town, and had been saving to send Nancy Lee to art school, in case she were permitted to enter. But the scholarship would help a great deal, for they were not rich people.

- 8 A synonym for the word inkling is
- A. drawing.
  - B. criticism.
  - C. hint.
  - D. step.
- 9 Why does Nancy Lee feel her picture is the best she has ever painted?
- A. It shows her great technical ability.
  - B. It expresses something important to her.
  - C. It combines modernistic and traditional themes.
  - D. It has already received praise from many people.
- 10 Based on paragraph 4, the most personal element in Nancy Lee's painting is the
- A. blue sky.
  - B. tall flagpole.
  - C. group of children.
  - D. old black woman.
- 11 Why does Miss O'Shay tell Nancy Lee about the scholarship before the assembly?
- A. She wants to give Nancy Lee time to prepare herself.
  - B. She needs to make sure that Nancy Lee attends the assembly.
  - C. She hopes Nancy Lee's parents will be able to attend the assembly.
  - D. She knows that Nancy Lee has been worried about the scholarship.
- 12 Analyze what the interactions between Nancy Lee and the two women (Miss Dietrich and Miss O'Shay) reveal about her relationship with each woman. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

13 In paragraph 18, the word conferred means

- A. discussed.
- B. planned.
- C. prepared.
- D. awarded.

14 Based on the passage, what is true about Nancy Lee's parents?

- A. They value art and education.
- B. They are teaching her to paint.
- C. They hope she will stay close to home.
- D. They are unaware of her artistic talents.

15 The climax of this passage occurs when

- A. Nancy Lee knocks on Miss O'Shay's office door.
- B. Miss Dietrich tells Nancy Lee about the scholarship.
- C. Miss O'Shay tells Nancy Lee how much she will be missed.
- D. Miss Dietrich asks for information about Nancy Lee's family.

16 What will Nancy Lee **most likely** do next?

- A. prepare her speech for the assembly
- B. visit her mother at work
- C. share her news with her friends
- D. buy a frame for her painting

17 Explain Nancy Lee's motivation(s) in the passage. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

# Acknowledgments

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